AN INQUIRY

INTO THE

RISE and ESTABLISHMENT

OF THE

Royal Academy of Arts.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A Letter to the Earl of *Bute*.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH the private concerns of an injured individual may be deemed unintereſting to the public; yet the author of the following ſheets, conſcious of having perſevered, with an honeſt and commendable zeal, to promote the progreſs of the fine arts, and particularly that of engraving in this country, humbly hopes this plain narrative will not be altogether uſeleſs. The public, whoſe protection he gratefully acknowledges, will judge his caſe with candour: and the dictates of his own heart tell him, that an appeal to their feelings will be received with ſome attention.

There are certain actions, criminal in themſelves, againſt which the law has provided no remedy. The *indirect* abuſe of power, and the influence of a high ſtation *artfully* directed to injure, perhaps to ruin an innocent man are crimes of this nature. But fortunately, in this happy country, there lies an appeal, in all ſuch caſes, to the ſupreme tribunal of the public. It is therefore not only juſt but laudable to expoſe ſuch actions, that they may not be carried on with triumph, or committed without cenſure.

The following account was written ſoon after the erecting of the royal academy of arts at London. It was to reſcue engraving, an art as uſeful as ingenious, from the indignity,

which, the author apprehended, was, on his account, thrown upon it by that eſtabliſhment. Various reaſons have hitherto prevented him from giving it to the public. Reſtrained by that regard which was due to the dignity of a great perſonage, he was long unwilling to publiſh a work which perhaps *by ſome* might unjuſtly be interpreted into a want of deference and reſpect, to a character he honours and reveres. Nor did he determine to publiſh it till he had tried every means, which either prudence, duty, or reſpect could poſſibly point out to him, by which he might unveil the truth to that diſtinguiſhed perſonage. But as his endeavours have unfortunately prov-

ed ineffectual, he now ſubmits his caſe to the candour of the impartial public.

E R R A T A.

page,	*line*,	*for*,	*read*,
10,	11,	provocked,	provoked.
14,	8,	extroardinary,	extraordinary.
21,	8,	unſuſpicions,	unſuſpicious.
25,	15,	recommanded,	recommended.
46,	11,	carring,	carrying.
54,	ult.	Eaſter,	Eſther.
	14,	lanſcape,	landſcape.
	21,	lo,	to.
58,	8,	punnishment,	punishment.
64,	5,	rhe,	the.
66,	4,	deſintereſted,	diſintereſted.
76,	19,	Mageſty's,	Majeſty's.
95,	10,	perſuing,	purſuing.
	14,	perſued,	purſued.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,

THE EARL OF BUTE.

MY LORD,

THE ſubject of the following epiſtle will, I flatter myſelf, apologize, in ſome meaſure, for the liberty I take of addreſſing it to your Lordship.

My attachment to the fine arts made me long deſire to viſit Italy. The farther I advanced in life, I became the more perſuaded that ſuch a journey was eſſential to an artiſt, who had the

laudable ambition to acquire reputation in his profeſſion. I undertook that journey in 1760, having in the preceding year communicated my intention to the public.

It was about that time, when M. Ramſay was employed to paint two whole length portraits, one of his Majeſty, then Prince of Wales, and the other of your Lordship. Having finished the former, M. Ramſay ſignified to me that it would be agreable both to his Royal Highneſs and your Lordship if I would engrave a print from it. I was then at Kenſington Palace, employed in executing ſeveral plates from pictures in that collection; a work which had conſumed above two years of my time, and which I was anxious to finish.

Apprehenſive that this propoſal, from the manner in which it was de-

livered, was more the private wish of M. Ramſay than the immediate deſire either of the Prince or your Lordship, I repreſented to him how incompatible ſuch a work would be with my other engagements, and the loſs I should inevitably ſuſtain by laying them aſide. For at this time I had ſettled my affairs, in order to go to Italy, and waited only the publication of the prints, which he then ſaw were nearly finished. I told him that I was morally certain, that neither his Royal Highneſs nor your Lordship were ſufficiently acquainted with the nature of ſuch undertakings; that had it been the work of a few months, I would not have heſitated a moment to comply with his requeſt; but as that portrait would employ me nearly the ſpace of two years, it became an object of importance to me.

I therefore begged leave to decline the undertaking, at leaſt till he had repreſented my ſituation, which I earneſtly requeſted he would do. This converſation ended with my telling him, that I would be in town in a few days, when I ſhould wait on your Lordſhip, and at the ſame time give him my final anſwer.

On my return to town I related the above particulars to two gentlemen, mutual friends to M. Ramſay and me, and by whoſe opinions I was reſolved to conduct myſelf in this affair. They approved much of what I had done, and added, that I ought by no means to liſten to propoſals made by M. Ramſay alone. For they obſerved, that if either the Prince or your Lordſhip deſired that their portraits might be engraved by me, they would doubtleſs ſee me on this occaſion, an

honour to which, indeed, I had been before frequently admitted. The ſentiments of theſe gentlemen tended to confirm me in my opinion.

I went directly, my Lord, to know your pleaſure, and to certify myſelf how far my conjectures with reſpect to the work propoſed, were well founded; but I had not the honour of ſeeing you. Afterwards I waited on M. Ramſay; I told him I had maturely conſidered his propoſal, but that I found the reaſons, which I had given him, were more prevalent with me than ever, and begged that he would repreſent them reſpectfully to the Prince and to your Lordship. M. Ramſay I perceived was much diſappointed: he anſwered me, » give your reaſons yourſelf « — I replied, that ſuch had been my intention, — that I had juſt come from your Lordship's,

but had not been admitted, — that as he had bronght me a propoſal, I thought it incumbent upon him to carry back my anſwer. Here we parted. I returned, my Lord, a ſecond time to pay you my humble reſpects; but to as little purpoſe: and as I received no meſſage from your Lordſhip, I concluded that this propoſal came chiefly from M. Ramſay.

About a fortnight after, I came to town again, for a few days, with an intention to circulate propoſals for the publication of the plates I had then in hand. It was at this time that M. Chambers, Architect, brought me a meſſage directly from the Prince, acquainting me he was deſirous that I ſhould engrave the two whole length portraits painted by M. Ramſay, — that I ſhould lay aſide every other engagement, and begin with that of your

Lordship; — and that the Prince in conſideration of my trouble, would make me a preſent of one hundred guineas, and patronize a ſubſcription for theſe portraits (*a*).

This propoſal, indeed, allarmed me ſo much, that I was at a loſs what anſwer to make. I conſidered the ſum mentioned, how inadequate ſoever to the labour of almoſt four years, as an effect of his Royal Highneſs's generoſity in the intention, who, being a ſtranger to the nature of ſuch undertakings, doubtleſs imagined that I could execute theſe plates in the courſe of a few months.

(*a*) M. Ryland was afterwards employed to engrave them. He conſumed almoſt four years in executing this work. He was paid one hundred guineas for making the drawings, and received fifty pounds each quarter, during that period, beſides the advantage that aroſe from the ſale of the prints. And even the above ſum has been continued to him by way of ſalary.

I could not but regret that M. Ramſay, as it now appeared, had not repreſented, according to my requeſt, the ſituation of my affairs. Had he done ſo, it would probably have procured me the honour of ſeeing your Lordship, and prevented the meſſage, which was now ſo diſtreſſing to me.

I told M. Chambers, that I wished to avoid giving any anſwer to his propoſal till I had ſeen your Lordship. M. Chambers who could not but obſerve my uneaſineſs, ſaid that he was not only concerned, but ſenſible how diſadvantageous ſuch an offer was to my intereſt, the moment he was authorized to make it; but intimated, that as he was only a meſſenger in the affair, he could not help delivering it, adding that it was neceſſary he ſhould have my anſwer, becauſe the Prince was impatient for his re-

turn. Thus ſituated, I related to him the particulars of what had paſſed between M. Ramſay and me, — I even opened my mind more minutely to him than I could have done, with propriety, to M. Ramſay himſelf — I thought myſelf happy in having cultivated a particular friendſhip with M. Chambers, which a long acquaintance, ſince his firſt arrival in this country, had, on my ſide, rendered ſincere, — I concluded by begging him to lay with all duty and ſubmiſſion, my ſituation before the Prince, and by declining to accept the propoſal that was made me, till his Royal Highneſs ſhould be informed of the nature of ſuch works.

M. Chambers gave me every aſſurance of his friendſhip, and promiſed to return in a day or two, to let me know what paſſed on the occaſion. He

returned, and ſaid that the Prince was exceeding well pleaſed, and thought my reaſons were both natural and juſt. This declaration made me perfectly eaſy. But how great was my ſurprise, when, a day or two afterwards, a friend of mine told me that he had ſeen M. Ramſay, who informed him that he had met your Lordship, and that you ſaid to him the Prince was ſo provocked at my refuſal, that he could not bear to hear my name mentioned.

Theſe two accounts of the Prince's opinion on this ſubject are no doubt contradictory, but I am ſorry to be forced to obſerve, that experience ſeems to have confirmed what your Lordship was ſaid to have declared. From that period, the protection, with which I thought myſelf highly honoured, and which I was juſtly proud

of and grateful for, has been totally withdrawn from me. But this could never have happened, had my ſituation and the nature of the propoſal been *fairly ſtated* to the Prince, as I repreſented them to M. Chambers. For in that caſe it cannot be ſuppoſed that his Royal Highneſs, ſo conſpicuous for humanity and benevolence, would have expreſſed himſelf in the words above mentioned, and much leſs that I ſhould become an object of reſentment for having declined to undertake a work ſo evidently detrimental to my family. Yet by the ſequel it would appear that ſuch has been my misfortune.

In this queſtion between M. Chambers and me, I muſt, with the moſt humble ſubmiſſion, appeal to his Majeſty's known juſtice and clemency. His memory is good, and the circumſtan-

ces of the caſe, are ſimple and few. If the King was miſinformed, and I thereby misrepreſented, he muſt be ſenſible, if ever he ſhould vouchafe to peruſe the following ſheets, that his influence has been uſed to oppreſs an injured artiſt. If M. Chambers did not deliver my anſwer to the Prince himſelf, ſome third perſon might be the author of this injuſtice.

After remaining in town a few days, and leaving the iſſue of my propoſals to the generoſity of the public, I returned to Kenſington. It was at this criſis that I began firſt to experience the conſequence of his Royal Highneſs's and your Lordship's diſpleaſure. The reaſons which I had given, and which I now faithfully relate, for declining to execute the work propoſed to me, had no doubt been ſupreſſed, and my conduct ſo miſrepreſen-

ted, as laid the foundation for the prejudices that were imbibed againſt me. The ſubſcription, for the publication of my prints, then in hand, was but juſt opened, when, all of a ſudden, reports were ſpread greatly to my diſadvantage: reports falſe and void of all foundation. But how could one, My Lord, in my humble ſituation of life, bear up againſt the ſuppoſed influence of a young amiable Prince, the favorite of his people, and againſt the power of a nobleman, who promiſed to become the Mecænas of the age? My ſubſcription therefore received an immediate check; and my friends, hearing the injurious reports, and not knowing how to contradict them, were much alarmed. Finding this to be the caſe, I abandoned my works at Kenſington, and returned to town, in order to juſtify myſelf to my friends

and to the public. Every body who heard my ſtory ſaw clearly into the bad intention with which theſe reports were circulated. On this occaſion I endeavoured, for a third time, to get admittance to your Lordship, but was ſtill refuſed. This I thought the more extroardinary, as you know, My Lord, I had never, before this affair was agitated, been denied that honour. I then took the liberty of writing to you on the ſubject, in which I explained the nature of the work propoſed to me, and the reaſons for which I had declined it: viz. the important concerns of a husband, and father of a numerous and encreaſing family. I even wished a hearing upon the ſubject.

To this letter your Lordship did not condeſcend to honour me with any reply. Nor had I ever an oppor-

tunity of perſonally juſtifying myſelf. Daily experience has however taught me that I had incurred, altho innocently your firm diſpleaſure.

A nobleman who had on all occaſions honoured me with his friendſhip, ſent for me at this time, to know the particulars of the affair, which he had heard repreſented greatly to my diſadvantage. He told me that he had ſeen a gentleman that morning who had come from your Lordship, and who in a converſation he had with you upon the ſubject of the portraits, found you much prejudiced againſt me, and that your Lordship made uſe of the following expreſſion. — » It is a thing *we* are determined never to forgive him ». — Another of my friends applied, in my behalf, to a gentleman who was intimate with your Lordship. That gentleman re-

ported, he took an opportunity to introduce the ſubject, but, finding that ſuch were your prejudices againſt me, he was obliged inſtantly to drop it. Theſe, My Lord, were affecting circumſtances to one whoſe innocence was his only protection.

Had I been admitted to the honour of an interview with your Lordship, I am confident that no miſunderſtanding would have happened, and no miſrepreſentations could have taken place. And from my heart I affirm, that I was too much impreſsed with a ſenſe both of that duty and gratitude, which I owed the Prince and your Lordship, not to have ſincerely wished to deſerve the continuance of his Royal Highneſs's patronage, and your Lordships protection.

My firſt publication after this unhappy period, and which conſiſted of three

three hiſtorical prints, viz. Venus attired by the Graces, S. Agnes, and the judgment of Hercules, gave me a farther proof of my having incurred a permanent diſpleaſure. On ſuch occaſions I had always been happy enough to be allowed the honour of preſenting my works to the Prince and his Royal Mother. They were ever received with ſuch marks of generoſity and approbation as were flattering to the artiſt, and diſtinguished a Prince, who has conſtantly exerted himſelf as a patron of the arts.

That no conduct of mine might be conſtrued a want of duty or reſpect, I carried to your Lordship, previous to this publication, three ſets. With theſe I left a letter, requeſting that you would do me the honour to preſent them to their Royal Highneſses, and to receive a ſet for your own col-

lection. In a few days I had a viſit from M. Dalton, which confirmed all that my friends had told me, and plainly demonſtrated that I muſt have been inſidiouſly miſrepreſented to thoſe whoſe natural diſpoſitions would have led them to protection and encouragement. It is to be remarked, that two of the three prints, which I preſented at this time, were engraved from capital paintings belonging to his Majeſty: and, if I may claim any merit as an artiſt, it was in the execution of theſe ſubjects that I endeavoured to recommend myſelf.

Some months after this, My Lord, I did myſelf again the honour to write to you another letter. I informed you of my departure for Italy, and ſignified how happy I ſhould be to be honoured with any commands either from the Prince or your Lordſhip.

For conſcious of my own innocence, I was ſtill not without expectation of an opportunity of clearing myſelf, and therefore made a tender of my duty. But I received no anſwer. I then left London, reſolving to dedicate all my time to the purſuit of a work which the public is in ſome meaſure acquainted with, and which, should I be happy enough to accomplish, will, I flatter myſelf, do ſome credit to my country. I was not even without hopes that time, and the merit of this undertaking, would remove the prejudices which had been unjuſtly conceived againſt me. But I was miſtaken: for I found, as will appear in the ſequel, that perſecution was to haunt me even beyond the Alps, in the form of M. Dalton.

I ſhall paſs over the time which I ſpent in the cities of Rome, Naples,

and Florence, with obſerving only; that there I experienced, from perſons of the higheſt rank, every encouragement and aſſiſtance, which could contribute either to facilitate my undertaking, or render my abode agreeable in thoſe cities.

In my journey from Florence to Parma, in the year 1763, I paſſed through Bologna. And being informed that M. Dalton, accompanied by M. Bartolozzi, was there, I ſtoped a day on purpoſe to wait on the former. Our converſation turned chiefly upon the arts. He asked me ſeveral queſtions about the drawings I had done at Rome, Florence, &c. He was particularly deſirous to know what I intended to do at Bologna. I told him that upon my firſt coming into Italy, I had made an excurſion from Florence to Bologna, to take a view of the

collections in that city, in order to form an idea of the time it would be neceſſary for me to remain abroad, and that I had then fixed upon a few pictures, of which I was to make drawings, upon my return from Parma. M. Dalton then asked what they were. Unſuſpicions of the uſe he was to make of my anſwer, I told him the following, viz. *the circumciſion*, and *Abraham putting away Hagar* by Guercino, *S. Peter and S. Paul*, and the *Aldrovandi cupid* by Guido. I asked him if he was to employ M. Bartolozzi at Bologna. He ſaid he was not, adding that he had only brought him from Venice on a jaunt of recreation, to which city he was to return the wedneſday following. He then politely asked me if I had any commands for him. I thanked him, and told him that I had not any. M. Bartolozzi alſo

asked me the ſame queſtion, mentioning to me the day of his departure.

Here ended our converſation, and next morning I continued on my journey to Parma, where I remained about three months. Will it be credited, my Lord, when I inform you, that during my ſtay at Parma, M. Dalton had ſuſpended M. Bartolozzi's return to Venice, and had employed him to make drawings of the very pictures, or ſuch of them as he could get acceſs to, which I had unwarily told him were the objects of my journey? Could any perſon of candour have imagined this? Or could I have ſuſpected that M. Dalton would have availed himſelf of his Majeſty's name to perform ſo unworthy an action?

I knew nothing of this till my return to Bologna. The day after my arrival there, I waited on Cardinal Mal-

vezzi, the Archbishop, by whoſe intereſt I was to get acceſs to the picture of the *circumciſion* it being an altar piece. No ſooner had his Eminency peruſed the letter, I had the honour to preſent him, than he informed me that one M. Dalton, a bookſeller to the King of England, for ſuch he called him, had lately made application to him, in the name of his Majeſty, who, he ſaid, was deſirous of having a drawing of that picture: that he had obtained for him permiſſion to do it, and that the drawing was executed by M. Bartolozzi. He expreſſed the great difficulty he had to obtain the conſent of the nuns, to whom it belonged, to allow a ſcaffold, for that purpoſe, to be erected oppoſite to the altar. After much entreaty, I found it was to no purpoſe to continue my ſolicitation at this time, and retired.

I then went to the Sampieri palace, where two of the pictures were, which I had mentioned to M. Dalton. Here too I found an abſolute denial. Signor Valerio Sampieri, the proprietor, was pleaſed to give me this reaſon, viz. that as he had refuſed many of the nobility and Princes in Europe, who deſired to have copies of theſe pictures, he could not with any propriety deviate from his former reſolution. He added, indeed, that, if I would be ſatisfied to make a drawing, as was lately done by M. Bartolozzi from a copy, which he had of the S. Peter and S. Paul, I was at liberty. This naturally led me to ask ſome queſtions, which produced the following declaration. He ſaid that M. Dalton had applied to him in the name of the King, for permiſſion to have drawings made of the two pictures I deſired to en-

grave, but that he had for the reaſon already given declined it: he allowed him, however, to make a drawing, which M. Bartolozzi had executed, from the above mentioned copy; and renewed to me the ſame offer. I thanked him, and ſaid that a print engraved from *ſuch* a copy would neither do juſtice to the merit of the original, nor credit to my reputation.

Next morning I turned my thoughts upon the Aldrovandi Cupid. For this purpoſe I waited on Count Caſſali, a Bologneſe nobleman, to whom I had the honour to be particularly recommanded. No ſooner had I communicated to him my deſire, than he made anſwer, that it was the picture in Bologna he could moſt readily command. The Senator Aldrovandi, he ſaid, was his particular friend, and that he was that very evening to accompany his

lady to the opera, where he would ſee him, and ſettle the affair with him. I waited on the Count the following morning, when I ſoon found that M. Dalton had not only got the ſtart of me likewiſe here, but had put an effectual ſtop to every chance I might have had of accomplishing my deſire. He told me with regret, that he had not ſucceeded with his friend, and that the reaſons he had given him, for not complying with his requeſt, were ſo ſatisfactory, that they left no room to urge the affair. He then gave me the following particulars, deſiring that I might not, at that time, mention them in public. Application, he ſaid, had been made to the Senator Aldrovandi by a M. Dalton, who was collecting pictures for the King of England, to have a drawing made by M. Bartolozzi of the *ſleeping Cupid*

by Guido, which above all other pictures he wished to recommend to his Majeſty,—that a price had been agreed upon for the picture, —that the drawing had been ſent to London, —and that the final concluſion of the bargain waited only the King's approbation, which M. Dalton aſſured him would arrive about that time. He added, that the Senator Aldrovandi looked upon the picture as engaged to his Majeſty, but ſaid, if the bargain did not take place, that I should certainly be permitted to engrave it. With this declaration I was obliged to be ſatisfied.

In the evening I went to pay my reſpects to Signor Ercole Lelli, an ingenious artiſt and an excellent anatomiſt. This gentleman was well acquainted with M. Dalton. During the courſe of our converſation, I related

to him the particulars of the two preceding days, and mentioned what had formerly paſſed between M. Dalton and me at Bologna; I even hinted to him what I apprehended had influenced his conduct. Signor Lelli told me, that he had frequently intimated to M. Dalton his ſurpriſe at his having ſuſpended M. Bartolozzi's return to Venice, in order to make drawings of the pictures in queſtion, he being no ſtranger to my intention of engraving them. Signor Lelli ſaid — » in queſte occa-
» ſioni mi pareva ſempre ſtupido e con-
» fuſo, e fin al queſto momento io
» non ho potuto mai comprenderlo »
— « On theſe occaſions he appeared
» always ſtupid and confuſed, and till
» this moment I never could com-
» prehend him ».

There was preſent a gentleman, juſt arrived from Venice, who replied

that M. Dalton might have told what he pleaſed to the Senator Aldrovandi, but for his part he was certain that the drawing of the *sleeping Cupid* had not been ſent to England, for that he himſelf had ſeen it, not three days before, in Bartolozzi's poſſeſſion at Venice, and who was to engrave it. This piece of information was entirely new.

I remained, my Lord, ſeveral weeks unemployed by theſe intrigues of M. Dalton. About this time, however, M. Dundas, and ſome other British travellers, arrived at Bologna. I had the pleaſure of attending theſe gentlemen in viſiting the different collections of that city. After ſeeing the gallery in the Aldrovandi palace, we were carried into a ſmall apartment, which contained nothing remarkable except the picture of the *sleeping Cupid*. M. Dundas was particularly charmed with it, and asked me if there was no

poſſibility of purchaſing it. I told him that I was informed his Majeſty intended to have it, and that a drawing of it had been ſent to England for his approbation: but added, that from a circumſtance lately diſcovered, I was certain that it could not be true, and that therefore I would endeavour to ſerve him, if he ſincerely wished to have the picture. M. Dundas aſſured me that he was in earneſt, and that he would leave me for that purpoſe a credit.

The firſt step I took was to write to Venice, to know the truth of the information I had received, of the drawing being ſtill in M. Bartolozzi's poſſeſſion. This fact being confirmed, I got a friend, intimately connected with the Senator Aldrovandi, to repreſent the affair to him. It had the natural effect, and I was introduced

to him. I told him that my friend M. Dundas was to leave Italy in a few weeks, and begged he might come to a final reſolution: — that, I thought, for his own ſatisfaction he should write to Venice, to know the certainty of the drawing being there in M. Bartolozzi's poſſeſſion: for that this circunſtance could not but confirm him in the part which M. Dalton had acted, who only meant to procure acceſs to have a drawing of the picture. The whole of his conduct at Bologna appeared to be an impoſition of the groſſeſt nature, in order to diſappoint the effect of my journey there, for which he had in like manner made uſe of the King's name with Cardinal Malvezzi, and Signor Valerio Sampieri.

On this occaſion M. Dalton expoſed himſelf to the ſevere, but juſt re-

proaches of the Senator Aldrovandi, who ſeemed exceedingly hurt at the advantage which had been taken of him. He declared that M. Dalton, had agreed to pay him two thouſand zechins, that is, about a thouſand pounds, for the picture: but I purchaſed it from him afterwards for M. Dundas conſiderably under that ſum.

No man, My Lord, will believe that the King could be capable of taking a part in ſo dishonourable an affair. Something more than my bare aſſertion may be demanded as neceſſary to procure a belief, that M. Dalton could have engaged himſelf in an impoſition, ſo open to detection, as well as mean, and ſo diſgraceful to his royal maſter. The importance therefore of the queſtion to all concerned, obliges me to preſent you the following certificates. I know they would

would have been made out in ſtronger terms if the King's name had not commanded reſpect.

Nos, Vincentius S. R. E. Presbyter, Cardinalis Malvetius, Bononiæ Archiepiſcopus, & S. R. I. Princeps:

Omnibus, & ſingulis præſentes noſtras litteras inſpecturis, fidem facimus, & atteſtamur, Dominum Dalton, Regis Angliæ Bibliopolam, anno 1763, a nobis facultatem petiiſſe, ut ipſe *pro laudato Angliæ Rege*, pictam tabulam celeberrimi viri equitis Jo. Franciſci Barbieri, vulgò Guercino da Cento, quæ D. N. J. C. circumciſionem refert, a Domino Bartolozzi, faceret lineamentis efformare: Noſque dicti Domini Dalton votis pro hujuſmodi effectu annuendo, petitam tunc facultatem eidem imperti-

tos fuiſſe. In quorum fidem has noſtras litteras ſolito ſigillo noſtro munitas, noſtraque manu ſubſignatas, damus.

Ex noſtro Archiepiſcopali Palatio Bononiæ, hac die 20 Decembris 1773.

Vinc. Card. Malvetius, Archiepiſcopus.

Paulus Canonicus Comes a Secretis.

TRANSLATION.

We Vincentius Malvetius Cardinal Presbyter of the S. R. C., Archbishop of Bologna, and Prince of the S. R. Empire:

To all and every one who shall ſee theſe preſents, certify and atteſt that M. Dalton bookſeller to the King of England, asked a permiſſion from us, in the year 1763, to allow M. Bartolozzi to make a drawing, *for the ſaid King of England*, of the picture repreſenting the circumciſion of

our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, painted by the celebrated John Francis Barbieri, knight, commonly called Guercino da Cento, and we having granted M. Dalton's requeſt, the permiſſion was given accordingly. In teſtimony whereof we give theſe our letters, ſealed with our uſual ſeal, and ſigned by us, at our Archbishop's Palace in Bologna this 20 day of December 1773.

(*Signed*) Vinc. Card. Malvetius Archiepiſcopus.

Paulus Canonicus Comes a Secretis.

Bologna queſto di 20 Aprile 1774.

Faccio fede io infraſcritto, che anni ſono, e per quanto a me pare nell anno 1763 o 1764, eſsendo qui di paſsaggio il Sig^r. Dalton Ingleſe, ed avendo veduti alcuni miei quadri, fra i quali uno repreſentante Amore que

dorme, creduto di Guido Reni, mi fece chiedere il prezzo ſi di eſſo, que d'altri miei quadri, ch' egli diſſe *aver commiſſione di comprare per ordine di S. M. il Re della Gran Brittagna:* e ſentito il prezzo, promiſe darne riſpoſta al ſuo ritorno dal giro ch' egli doveva fare dell' Italia; dal quale ritornato promiſe pure dar riſpoſta al ſuo ritorno in Inghilterra, *il che poi non mantenne, non avendo mai piu dato riſpoſta di ſorte alcuna.* In occaſione di tal progettato contratto, mi ſoviene avermi egli richieſto il permeſſo di far fare un diſegno del ſudetto quadro rappreſentante Amore che dorme, ed avendovi io acconſentito, sò che impiegò certo Signor Bartolozzi di Venezia diſegnatore ed inciſore ben conoſciuto in Italia. — Che è quanto per verità poſſo aſſerire; in fede di chè mi ſottoſcrivo di propria

mano e carattère, munendo il preſente atteſtato col mio ſiggillo.

Conte Senatore Aldrovandi, Gentiluomo di Camera di S. M. il Re di Sardegna.

TRANSLATION.

Bologna 10 Apr. 1774.

I the underwritten, do atteſt, that ſome years ago, and as well as I can recolect, in the year 1763 or 1764, M. Dalton an Engliſhman, being here on a journey, and having ſeen ſome of my pictures, amongſt which there was one repreſenting a ſleeping Cupid, believed to be by Guido Reni, he got me to be asked the price of it, as well as of ſome others, which he ſaid *he had a commiſſion to buy by order of his Majeſty the King of great Britain*: and having heard the price, he

promiſed to give me an anſwer upon his return from a tour of Italy which he was to make. Upon his return, he promiſed next to give an anſwer as ſoon as he arrived in England; which promiſe *he did not perform, having never given an anſwer of any kind.* Upon occaſion of this projected bargain, I remember, that he asked leave of me to have a drawing made of the above picture repreſenting the ſleeping Cupid; and after having had my permiſſion, he employed M. Bartolozzi of Venice, a deſigner and engraver well known in Italy. This is what I can atteſt as truth, in teſtimony of which I ſubſcribe this declaration with my own hand, and ſeal it with my ſeal.

(*Signed*) Count Senator Aldrovandi,
Gentleman of the bed chamber to his Majeſty the King of Sardinia.

I have been the more particular, my Lord, in relating theſe circumſtances, as they are of an uncommon nature. M. Dalton can beſt account for his conduct, and give his reaſons why, under the maſk of friendſhip, he endeavoured thus to counteract an innocent man. It is a juſtice he owes to the King, whoſe name he appears, on this occaſion, to have ſhamefully proſtituted. It is a juſtice he owes to his own reputation.

Had he been a ſtranger to the cruel treatment I received on account of M. Ramſay's portraits, I ſhould in ſome meaſure have excuſed him. I ſhould have concluded, that he had taken his information from ſome prejudiced perſon, and was on this occaſion, tho at the expence of honour, indulging an illplaced reſentment. But, on the contrary, he knew the

whole circumſtances of that affair. And having myſelf explained them to him, before my departure from London, he ſhrunk up his ſhoulders and gave me for anſwer, that he was ſorry to acquaint me, that your Lordſhip in this affair, was entirely under the influence of M. Ramſay. What than can excuſe M. Dalton? He had at this time a lucrative office from the King, at whoſe expence he travelled, and whoſe patronage he enjoyed, — he was alſo the favourite of your Lordſhip. I, on the other hand, lay under the heavy diſpleaſure, I am afraid, of both, — had for ſeveral years left my country, — was engaged in a work exceedingly hazardous, — and in which I had embarked the little fortune of a family that was moſt dear to me.

M. Bartolozzi was forthwith brought

over to England; and, to fruſtrate my endeavours here, as well as in Italy, was employed to engrave thoſe very drawings, thus diſhonourably obtained at the expence of the King's name. A print of the *Circumciſion* was published. My print of the Aldrovandi *Cupid* appearing, was the reaſon, I apprehend, of the other's being laid aſide, for I was informed he had begun it.

After remaining ſome time at Bologna, I returned to London, hoping that I ſhould reap there the fruits of my paſt labours. Happy had it been for me had my ſuppoſed offences been expiated with my journey into Italy. But, on the contrary, what I had hitherto experienced, ſerved only as a prelude to what was preparing for me on my return to my native country.

I ſhall, in the next place, lay be-

fore your Lordship the reception I met with, upon my arrival at London, from a ſet of men, who were directors of the ſociety of artiſts, and to whom his Majeſty was, of late years, pleaſed to give the direction of a Royal Academy.

During my ſtay abroad, a royal charter, incorporating the artiſts, had been obtained. Annual exhibitions were thereby regulated, and the public had an opportunity of judging of the merit of many ingenious performances, which otherwiſe might have remained in obſcurity. Such an eſtablishment could not but flatter my hopes: and I reſolved to place in the enſuing exhibition a ſeries of my drawings. I communicated my intention to a friend, who was one of the Directors of the ſociety. He greatly approved of it; but ſaid that he was

afraid I would meet with a diſappointment. He then told me, that, almoſt upon the eve of my arrival, the Directors had paſſed a by-law containing certain rules and orders to be obſerved at the exhibitions; and that he heard it ſecretly whispered they meant, by theſe rules, to exclude me from the privilege of the exhibition; deſiring at the ſame time I would take no notice of the information he had given me. I waited in ſilence till the time of the exhibition; for I could not thoroughly believe, that ſuch illiberality could exiſt in a civilized country, and particularly amongſt a ſet of men profeſſing to be artiſts, and eſtabliſhed for the improvement of the arts in general.

Before I proceed in my narration, will your Lordship pardon me if I carry you, for a moment, back into

antiquity, and ſuppoſe a caſe, which in reality might have happened? Let us for inſtance imagine that, during thoſe periods of refinement, in which the Romans were advancing towards perfecting their taſte and knowledge in almoſt every art and ſcience, ſome artiſt, prompted by the love of his profeſſion, did of himſelf, leaving his country and his family, undertake a journey into Greece, to ſelect drawings from the works of Appelles, Zeuxis and other great painters of theſe countries, with an intention of giving them to the public, and that he had even expended his ſmall fortune in this undertaking, and in purchaſing many of the fine productions of thoſe maſters. Let us enquire what would naturally have been the reception of this artiſt upon his return to Rome. Would the public protection

have been withheld from him? No ſurely. Would he not have been received with open arms by his countrymen? And would not the breaſt of every generous Roman of taſte have been warm in promoting his intereſt? Is it not reaſonable to imagine, that he might have been honoured with the ſmiles of an Auguſtus, or countenanced by the protection of a Mecænas? Will it be believed, that in the age I mention, in thoſe times of refinement, a ſet of men could have exiſted to counteract the laudable endeavours of this artiſt; ſome, before his return home, pleading the pretence of Royal authority, and others to way-lay him, as it were, upon his arrival, with a deſign to exclude him from the favour of the public, and to injure him in the moſt ſenſible manner in their eſteem? The human mind

will revolt at a thought of this nature, and every generous breaſt will deteſt the ſuppoſition. — Yet ſuch, my Lord, is the treatment which I experienced: ſuch a ſet of men do really exiſt in our days, whoſe conduct it is now incumbent on me to lay open.

The time of the exhibition drawing near, which was ſoon after my arrival, and a day being appointed for carring in the different works of the artiſts, I reſolved, to prevent alarm, to exhibit only a ſingle drawing, which I imagined there was a moral impoſſibility of their rejecting. I therefore carried the drawing of the *Magdalen* by Guido, of which I have lately finiſhed the print. On this occaſion there were preſent the preſident and many of the directors. No ſooner had I entered the room than I was accoſted by them.

They called out, upon my preſenting my work, that it was a coloured drawing, and could not be admitted into the exhibition. A long altercation enſued. I ſaid what I thought was incumbent on me, in my own behalf, but to no purpoſe. My opponents, I clearly ſaw, were too numerous and too powerful.

It is but doing juſtice to the friendſhip which I received from M. Moſer, to acknowledge it in the moſt public manner. This artiſt pleaded my cauſe, with a degree of warmth and zeal, which, I plainly perceived, ſtaggered the reſt. They asked him if he did not know that they had paſt a law? He replied, he was no ſtranger to that law; but at the ſame time added, that they knew, as well as he, that they had it in their power to overrule that law, which, he ſaid, in

the preſent caſe they ought to do; and the rather, he was pleaſed to add, that ſuch a drawing would be a credit to the exhibition. Never did a ſet of men make a more rediculous appearance, ſtaring with a profound ſilence at each other. At length the preſident broke out, and ſaid, gentlemen, what do you think? Shall *us* put it to the ballot? They all called out, M. Moſer and M. Stubbs excepted, ay, let us put it to the ballot, let us put it to the ballot. I had not the pleaſure of knowing the laſt of theſe gentlemen, but I could eaſily ſee, from his benevolent behaviour, and the *tête a tête* converſation he had with ſeveral of the directors, that he was my friend. M. Moſer immediately replied, that they might do as they pleaſed; for his part he would not ballot; that he had given his opinion

nion in public, and would abide by it. M. Newton their ſecretary, went to prepare the balloting-box. When I ſaw this, being ſenſible how the matter would end, I told them that they might ſave themſelves the trouble, and accordingly I carried back my drawing.

Juſt arrived from abroad, I own, I was anxious that my name ſhould not be altogether excluded from the public. I therefore preſented a ſingle head, from a picture of Guercino. This, with much difficulty they condeſcended to admit, becauſe it was only executed in red and black chalk. But even this drawing if it poſſeſſed any degree of merit, could not be known, for it was hung at a conſiderable height, ſequeſtered, as it were, from the eyes of the ſpectator.

Here I could not avoid drawing a parallel between the reception I met

with at home, and that which, but a few months before, I had experienced from the royal academy of painting in Paris. Upon my return from Italy, I had the honour of being received, unanimouſly, a member of that academy. It is cuſtomary on thoſe occaſions, for the candidate to place in the academy ſuch ſpecimens of his works, as he judges proper for the inſpection of the academicians, that they may thereby form a judgment of the ability of the artiſt. With a few of my engravings, I accordingly preſented a ſeries of the drawings I had made abroad. Before the aſsembly broke up, when I was expecting to carry back theſe ſpecimens as is uſual, I was asked by order of the academy, if I had any objection againſt leaving my drawings, a few days, for the inſpection of the ſtudents. This ho-

nour was too flattering not to be complied with. My drawings therefore remained a week in the academy, which was kept open, not only for the ſatisfaction of the ſtudents in particular, but for that of the public in general.

Had the directors of the ſociety of artiſts in London paſt a law, with a reſolution to make it general, and to abide by it, I should have had the leſs reaſon to complain: but as this law was manifaſtly calculated with a view to exclude me from the public attention, it will readily, I hope, be admitted to have been a glaring injuſtice on the part of theſe directors. For the very year following, they received into the exhibition a drawing in colours by M. Bartolozzi, from a picture of Annibale Carracci, belonging to the King. Several others, executed,

in the like manner, by this artiſt have appeared ſince: particularly in the very laſt exhibition of the royal academy, there was a copy in colours, of our Saviour appearing to the Virgin, from a picture painted by M. Mengs for the univerſity of Oxford.

The career of malice did not ſtop here. At the opening of that exhibition from which my drawing had been excluded, I published propoſals for engraving four hiſtorical prints, and at the ſame time I gave to the public two prints from Raphael. A few days had ſcarce elapſed, when there appeared, in the public advertiſer, a very long and elaborate performance, taking to pieces theſe prints, in order to depretiate them in the eſteem of the public, and to throw a damp upon my undertaking. The ſpirit of this compoſition, and ſome other circum-

ſtances, left no doubt that it came from the illiberal pen of a director. Indeed, many of them, at this period, did not even uſe common prudence in giving their opinions with reſpect to me and my works.

I again conſulted with my friends how I might recover your Lordship's protection. Conſcious that I had done nothing that should have deprived me of that honour, I hoped that your own reflection, and my long abſence, would have at length ſoftened your reſentment; but in vain: I was aſsured you were inflexible. I wished, no doubt, to have the honour of showing my drawings to the King: but I found every avenue shut againſt me.

No ſituation, my Lord, could be more diſagreeable than mine was at that period. The plan I had for years been engaged in had expended, I

may ſay, the whole of my little fortune; and the purchaſes I had made abroad were, at that time, diſperſed over the continent. It would have required a mind ſuperiour to misfortunes not to have felt extremely in ſuch circumſtances, and to bear up againſt the difficulties which ſurrounded me.

Upon cloſing the ſubſcription for my four hiſtorical prints (*a*), I informed the public that I was going abroad, to procure the neceſsary aſſiſtance for forwarding this work. Scarce had this advertiſement appeared, when freſh ſarcaſms were thrown out in the papers; and the public were cautioned not to encourage my

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(*a*) Venus, } from Titian.
Danae, }

Abraham putting away Hagar, } from Guercino.
Eaſter before Ahaſuerus, }

works, becauſe every line of them, forſooth, was not to be done with my own hands: as if it had been a matter of importance, whether the back ground of a ſubject, or the folds of a piece of drapery, were to be dead-coloured either by an English-man or a French-man: and as if we had not foreigners daily introduced into this country, who are encouraged in preference even to the natives of ſuperiour merit. But the nature of this reaſoning ſuited the genius of the directors, and, like the other treatment I had received, was too illiberal indeed to merit any attention.

In a few days after, I ſet out for Paris, where I published the two prints I had but lately engraved from Raphael, viz. *Juſtice* and *Meekneſs*. Theſe prints circulating over the continent, had the effect to revive ſuch a

demand for my works in general, that, during this journey, I had very conſiderable commiſſions for them. Thus a ſtranger in a foreign country received in ſome meaſure that recompence which he had been deprived of in his own.

Upon my return to London I published four prints which I intended puting into the next exhibition. By a miſtake of my frame-maker, they were not brought me till the morning after the day appointed for carrying in the pictures, &c. M. Wilſon, lanſcape painter, happened to be with me when I received them. He told me, he was juſt come from the exhibition room, and that there would be abundance of place; aſſuring me that they had not begun to hang up a ſingle picture, and deſiring me lo carry down my prints, and to deliver them to M. New-

ton, the ſecretary. Without loſs of time I did ſo. I intimated my arrival: I waited a conſiderable time in a common paſſage: at laſt M. Newton, who in all probability had been conſulting the directors, appeared. I told him with civility my ſtory: but was here again rejected, with an air of ſupercilious indifference.

After ſuch treatment, is it wonderful that I avoided to aſſociate with theſe men, and that, though a member of the ſociety, I even ſhunned their aſſemblies? It was by accident only that I was afterwards informed of the arbitrary manner, and of the partiality with which they governed the ſociety. There were, indeed, amongſt them a few individuals, men of genius and abilities, whom I eſteem and reſpect; but I believe they had the leaſt share in the management of the ſocieties affairs.

From the preceding narration, my Lord, it may naturally be concluded, that I had ſufficiently atoned for the diſpleaſure I had incurred about his Majeſty's and your Lordship's portraits, painted by M. Ramſay. But it will be found that I had hitherto received only a part of my punniſhment, that reſentment was not yet ſatiated, and that I was ſtill reſerved as a victim at the eſtabliſhment of the royal academy: an æra, my Lord, when, to the ſhame of theſe days, it will appear, by the following inquiry, that nothing leſs than the royal authority was made ſubſervient to the meaſures of a ſet of men, who, without regard to the reputation of their ſovereign, laboured to diſgrace a profeſſion, which had been honoured in the moſt civilized countries: a profeſſion which is now a credit and advantage to this kingdom in particular,

as well as an ornament to the arts in general.

I have the honour to be, with great reſpect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Moſt obedient and moſt
humble ſervant,
ROB. STRANGE.

AN

INQUIRY

INTO

The riſe and eſtabliſhment of the Royal Academy of arts, at London.

THE progreſs of the fine arts cannot but attract the attention of every lover of his country. Connected with various branches of manufactures, they become objects of importance in a commercial kingdom.

Academies, under proper regulations, are no doubt the beſt nurſeries of the fine arts. But when the eſtabliſhment of the academy at London is impartially examined, it will not, I am afraid, reflect that credit we wish upon the annals of its royal founder.

In order to give a general idea of the ſtate of the arts in this metropo-

lis, and the riſe of the royal academy; I ſhall go back to the year 1750.

The artiſts at that period were few in number. They ſupported, by annual ſubſcription, an academy in S. Martin's-Lane, which was governed by a committee. Many attempts were made, about that time to enlarge the plan of this academy, but they as frequently proved abortive: they failed through the intrigues of ſeveral amongſt the artiſts themſelves; who, ſatisfied with their own performances, and the moderate degree of abilities they poſſeſſed, wished, I believe, for nothing more than to remain, as they then were, maſters of the field.

A ſociety, compoſed of a number of the moſt reſpectable perſons of this country, commonly known by the name of the *dilettante*, made the firſt ſtep towards an eſtablishment of this-

nature. That ſociety, having accumulated a conſiderable fund, and being really promoters of the fine arts, generously offered to appropriate it, to ſupport a public academy.

General Gray, a gentleman diſtinguished by his public ſpirit and fine taſte, was deputed by that ſociety to treat with the artiſts. I was preſent at their meetings. On the part of our intended benefactors, I obſerved that generoſity and benevolence, which are peculiar to true greatneſs; but on the part of the majority of the leading artiſts, I was ſorry to remark motives, apparently limited to their own views and ambition to govern, diametrically oppoſite to the liberality with which we were treated. After various conferences, the *dilettante* finding that they were to be allowed no share in the government of the academy,

or in appropriating their own fund, the negotiation ended.

The donations in painting, which ſeveral artiſts preſented to the *foundling hoſpital*, were among the firſt objects of this nature, which had engaged the attention of the public. The artiſts, obſerving the effects that theſe paintings produced, came, in the year 1760, to a reſolution to try the fate of an exhibition of their works. This effort had its deſired effect: the public were entertained, and the artiſts were excited to emulation.

Theſe exhibitions, ſo flattering to every artiſt of true genius, were annually renewed: they brought conſiderable ſums to the ſociety: they were the means of bringing to light the works of many ingenious young men, who might have otherwiſe remained in obſcurity.

During theſe times the arts in general made conſiderable progreſs. Yet unhappily there exiſted feuds and animoſities among the artiſts themſelves. Theſe ſprang from the partial adminiſtration of a committee, by whom the ſociety had been governed. The choice of this annual committee would naturally have fallen upon the moſt reſpectable artiſts, had not ſuch, from the multiplicity of their own affairs, frequently declined to accept the office. Hence it was that many places in this body were occupied by men of little merit in their profeſſions. However this committee, by degrees ſo ſtrengthened their party, that at length they came to have an aſcendency at all the meetings of the artiſts: they aſſumed an abſolute privilege of arranging the pictures, &c. at the exhibitions: they reſolved that a preſident and ſecretary

should

should be choſen by themſelves out of their own number: and to fortify themſelves ſtill more effectually, they had the addreſs to augment the committee from ſixteen to twenty four: theſe being ſecure votes, at every election, rendered them, with the attachments they had formed, an overmatch for the injured part of the ſociety.

Complaints frequently aroſe about the management of the exhibitions. It was obſerved with regret, that the works of many ingenious young men, advancing in their profeſſions, were thruſt into obſcure corners and ſequeſtered, as it were, from the public view, to make way for ſome of the pitiful performances of the members of the committee and their adherents. But ſuch complaints were always treated with diſdain.

Alarmed at the regular advances which the committee had made towards deſpotiſm, ſeveral ingenious and deſintereſted artiſts, who belonged to the ſociety, turned their thoughts to obtain an eſtabliſhment that would be more favourable to the progreſs of the arts, and would prevent the abuſes ſo frequently complained of: but their efforts were always counteracted by the committee.

Freſh alarms, however, occaſioned freſh conſultations. Various opinions were offered on the ſubject; but the obtaining a charter, to incorporate the arts, was thought to be the moſt effectual way to ſecure the property, as well as the independency of the ſociety. A motion was therefore made, at one of the general meetings, humbly to apply to his Majeſty for ſuch a charter. The committee ſtrongly op-

poſed this meaſure. Great confuſion aroſe in the debates, and much more heat and animoſity was expreſſed, than ſo fair and diſintereſted a proceeding could be ſuppoſed to excite. The deſigns of the committee were indeed ſo obvious, that, upon the queſtion being put, it was carried by a majority in the affirmative. In conſequence of this reſolution, his Majeſty was graciously pleaſed to grant a charter, January the 26 1765.

It is much to be regretted that a reaſonable plan was not deviſed, at this time, for the government of the ſociety; that would have been more ſalutary to the arts in general, than the regulations which had given riſe to ſuch abuſes; but unfortunately matters were ſo little ſifted on one hand, and ſo artfully managed on the other, that the very men, who had preſided

in the committee, were, by their own and their friends voices, nominated the firſt *directors* of this eſtabliſhment; by which appellation they ſhall be hereafter diſtinguiſhed, as the other members ſhall be by that of *fellows*.

From this change of government, the arts could reap little advantage from the charter. The *directors* became as deſpotic as ever. The private academy in S. Martin's Lane, which laboured under many diſadvantages, remained in its former languiſhing ſtate, — the ſame partiality in the diſtribution of the pictures, at the exhibitions, took place, — and the ſame complaints were renewed.

Senſible of the neceſſity of a public academy for the advancement of the arts, many of the *fellows* endeavoured, from time to time, to obtain

ſuch an eſtabliſhment, but they were always oppoſed by the *directors*. There were even amongſt the *directors*, who informed me that they had likewiſe made ſeveral motions of this nature, at their ſeperate meetings, but which were conſtantly overruled. This was the more ſurpriſing, as the ſociety had then a capital of near l. 3000, and an annual income of about l. 700, which aroſe from the exhibitions.

How can the *directors* juſtify themſelves to the public, for oppoſing meaſures ſo evidently calculated for the improvement of the arts? Could men of genius, diſintereſted, and real lovers of the arts act ſuch a part? No ſurely. But we need not be ſurpriſed at this conduct when we conſider who the majority of the *directors* were. In their company, how often have I burnt with a ſecret indignation when, I

have heard the names of the great maſters of Italy treated with contempt! at the ſame time, when we examine the works of thoſe critics, we find what would only move our compaſſion, if the authors were but modeſt. Theſe are truths too glaring to be contradicted.

After various ſtruggles in favour of ſo deſirable an eſtabliſhment, at length, at a quarterly meeting of the ſociety, March the 3d 1767. a motion was propoſed and ſeconded by the *fellows*, who carried it by a conſiderable majority, viz. that a public academy ſhould be erected, and, according to the minutes of the ſociety, » that it » be referred to the *directors* to con- » ſider of a proper form for inſtituting » a public academy, and to lay the » ſame before the quarterly meeting » in September next «. It was farther reſolved, that the intention of the

ſociety, ſhould be ſignified to the public, in the daily papers.

This reſolution of the ſociety was far from being agreable to ſome of the *directors*. They had ſeparate views, which in the courſe of time appeared, and gave riſe to the firſt dawnings of a royal inſtitution, about two years before its eſtabliſhment.

M. Dalton, librarian to his Majeſty, had been treaſurer to the ſociety, and a leading man in the direction. He had lately diviſed a plan of eſtabliſhing, what he called, *a print warehouſe*. With that view he purchaſed the property, which belonged, to M. Lamb the auctioneer, in pall-mall. There he expended a conſiderable ſum in building and making neceſſary alterations for his new project. But being conducted without judgement and without taſte, it ſoon proved abortive.

Finding therefore the ridiculous appearance his undertaking made, and anxious to relieve himſelf of the great expence into which it had involved him, M. Dalton, in conjunction with ſome of his friends, formed a ſcheme to engage the King to eſtablish an academy in theſe rooms. But this was kept a profound ſecret from the ſociety till they obtained the royal conſent.

No perſon ever played a more ſucceſsful game. M. Dalton, my information ſays, was perpetually about the perſon of the King; and availing himſelf of a proper opportunity, ſucceeded. His Majeſty clearly ſaw the folly into which his librarian had precipitated himſelf; and therefore, from his natural humanity, as well as from a deſire of promoting the fine arts, which he loved, adopted the propoſed plan. It was at next quarterly meeting,

June the 2d, that it was communicated to the ſociety. One of the *directors*, who had been let into the ſecret, delivered the meſſage, as coming directly from the King. The ſociety therefore repealed their reſolution, of March the 3d, as appears from the following minute.

» June 2d 1767.

» RESOLVED,

» That the reſolution which mentions that the *directors* ſhould proceed to conſider of a form for inſtituting a public academy be repealed, his Majeſty having been graciouſly pleaſed to declare his royal intention, of taking the academy under his protection ».

The inſtitution of a public academy, ſo long the wish of every inge-

nious artiſt, could not but give univerſal ſatisfaction. It ſeemed to promiſe a perfect completion of their deſires. And to show their readineſs to promote ſuch an eſtablishment, the ſubſcribers to the academy in S. Martin's lane conſented that their furniture, anatomical figures, buſts, ſtatues, &c. ſhould be forthwith tranſported to the rooms in *pall-mall*. The label over the door containing the *print warehouſe* was erazed, and another ſubſtituted in its place, viz. *the royal academy*.

But, although dignified with the name of royalty, this inſtitution proved of no ſort of benefit to the arts. M. Dalton's plan ſoon appeared in its genuine colours; that is, calculated ſolely with a view to his own private intereſt. The dignity of the King was, on this occaſion, ſacrificed: and, would

the world believe it! an annual ſubſcription of one guinea was ſet on foot to ſupport this *royal inſtitution*, which every ſtudent, &c. was obliged to pay at the opening of the academy. There were ſeveral, I know, who, without any intention of profiting from the academy, contributed their mite, by ſubſcribing to help out the inſtitution, now in its infancy. Part of the rooms only were appropriated for the purpoſes of the *royal academy*; the reſt, for the farther benefit of M. Dalton, were occaſionally let out to auctioneers, dancing maſters, &c.

This eſtabliſhment, equally ſhameful to its authors, as it was inglorious to the nation, continued about two years. During this period the ſociety was again torn with diviſions. The *fellows*, many of them the moſt ingenious artiſts in the ſociety were

deſirous that a rotation in the direction should take place ; and , weary of the yoke of their oppreſsors , they wished for a reform in the government. Every attempt , however , of this nature was warmly repelled by the *directors ;* who , in their annual elections , had taken care to rivet themſelves in their offices. The *fellows* ſaw likewiſe , with great concern , the diſgraceful plan of the new academy , and the diſcredit into which M. Dalton had drawn the King. It was from the propoſed rotation only that they had any proſpect of eſtabliſhing , what they ſo ardently wished for , ſuch an academy as would do honour to the arts ; and which , out of pure obedience to his Mageſty's meſsage , they had given up , — had ſubmitted to repeal an act which had paſt in the ſociety , for that purpoſe ,

— and had delivered up their property to the royal academy.

To this purpoſe a propoſal, in itſelf the moſt equitable, had been agitated in the ſociety: viz. That eight of the twenty four *directors* ſhould annually reſign their office, and be ſucceeded by others elected from among the *fellows*. By this means a rotation of honours would have taken place, and the affairs of the ſociety would have been conducted with propriety and harmony.

It was, as far as I could judge, the opinion of the *fellows*, that ſuch a change would be of real ſervice to the arts, as the annual election of eight new *directors* would certainly fall upon the moſt reſpectable artiſts: whereas, in the other way, a *director* was one who might hugg himſelf in the enjoyment of a permanent office,

power, and honour, without giving himſelf the trouble of deſerving applauſe from the ſociety. Had ſuch an alteration been made, it would have added weight and dignity to the direction, and given importance and reſpect to the whole ſociety, in the eye of the public. It would have been the more juſt too, when we reflect that many of the *directors* were men of inferiour abilities; whilſt ſeveral of the firſt artiſts of the kingdom were among the *fellows* of the ſociety.

The *directors* always oppoſed the paſſing ſuch a law. They pretended, that they had the opinion of an eminent lawyer that it was an innovation of the charter. However, it was at laſt reſolved, at a general meeting, that the opinion of the Attorney-General should be taken, and, as appears from their minutes, that ſuch

opinion, should be equally binding to both parties, as well as final and concluſive.

After many delays, the *directors* themſelves drew up a caſe, in which they ſtated the following queſtion. Viz.

» Whether any by-law to deprive » a *director* of the privilege of being » re-elected, at any annual election, » will, or will not be inconſiſtent » with, and repugnant to the direc- » tions of the charter? »

To this the attorney-general anſwered.

» I am of opinion, that ſuch a by- » law, as is propoſed, is not incon- » ſiſtent with the charter, but is a » regulation of the mode of elec- » tions, to prevent the whole power » of the ſociety being engroſsed by a » part, and to leave a share in the di-

» rection, in ſome ſmall degree, more
» open to the community ".

William de Grey.

Auguſt. 3. 1768.

This opinion having been read, at a general meeting of the ſociety, September the 8, a motion for the by-law was made and ſeconded; but which the *directors* openly oppoſed. When put in mind of the expediency of a little candour, and the obſervance of their promiſe, they declared their contempt of both. However, a ballot being demanded, it was carried againſt them, and the ſociety came to the following reſolution.

» That no more than ſixteen of
» the preſent *directors* be capable of
» being re-elected for the enſuing
» year. That the *directors* do conſi-
» der the above queſtion, and report
» their opinion at an extraordinary
» general

» general meeting, which the *preſi-*
» *dent* is deſired to call this day fort-
» night ».

Next day, the *directors* had a ſe-parate meeting. The anſwer of the attorney general had doubtleſs con-founded them: and being alarmed at the above determination of the ſociety, we find, among their minutes, the following, *very curious* compoſition.

» Sept. 9.th 1768. At a meeting of
» *directors.*

» Having taken into conſideration
» the motion made at the laſt general
» meeting, for making a law to ren-
» der eight *directors* non elegible for
» the enſuing year, came to the fol-
» lowing reſolution.

Nem. Con.

» That as the making of a law to-
» exclude the *directors* from being
» choſen the ſucceeding year, would

» be an attack upon the freedom of » elections, a dangerous innovation » of our charter, and an ungrateful » return to *directors* for their trou- » ble and care in the management of » the buſineſs of the ſociety; *we are* » *clearly of opinion* that no ſuch law » ſhould paſs; therefore we have re- » jected the propoſal.

» We hope the impartial part of » the ſociety, will think we acted » right, with regard to the many » attempts which have been made in » the ſociety to bring ſuch a law to » bear, we look upon them as the » efforts of a few deſigning perſons, » and as they have been always pre- » ferred with clamour and indecent » behaviour, it cannot be expected » that we ſhould pay any attention » to them.

» But that the impartial and re- » ſpectable part of the ſociety may

» not misinterpret our *firmness*, and
» imagine that we have any intention
» to keep possession of that power
» which the society has vested in us;
» eight of the present directors have
» agreed voluntarily to resign their
» *directorships*, before the day of
» the succeeding election, and to
» render themselves incapable of ser-
» ving for the ensuing year, and
» their particular names shall be spe-
» cified in the balloting list.

» This step has been thought pro-
» per at the present juncture, in or-
» der to render peace to the society
» (if possible) but it is expressly sti-
» pulated, that it shall not on any
» pretence whatever be construed in-
» to a precedent, as we are absolute-
» ly resolved to deliver up the *di-*
» *rectorship* to our successors undi-
» vested of any more of their privi-
» leges».

Theſe minutes, truly worthy of our *directors*, are too abſurd and contemptible to merit attention. We need therefore make no comments on them, nor upon the modeſty and candour of a ſet of men, who give it under their hands, that they are of a contrary opinion, in a point of law, to the attorney general; whoſe opinion they had previously promiſed, as men of honour, to follow.

The eve before the general meeting, the *directors* again aſsembled privately. Finding the moment draw near, which threatened a diſunion of their cabal, and their ambition and thirſt for power being inſatiable, they repented, it is to be preſumed, of the ſacrifice they were to make, to reſtore *peace* (to uſe their own words) *to the ſociety*: they came therefore to a reſolution, as appears by their books, to retract what they had done, and

ſuppreſs from the ſociety, that part of their minutes which alluded to the above reſignation; the *preſident* enjoining the moſt profound ſecrecy.

The day following, being the 20th, the ſociety met. Proceeding to buſineſs, the *directors* read only the firſt paragraph of their minutes of the 9th, in which they rejected the propoſed by-law, and gave an opinion directly contrary to the attorney general. One of their own number was now preſent, but who had not attended their meeting the preceding evening. This gentleman, a friend to the wished for by-law, and alarmed that the *directors* mentioned nothing of the reſignation of eight of their number, moved that the whole minutes of the 9th should be read. This motion was univerſally ſeconded by the *fellows*, and the reader may eaſily

ſuppoſe the confuſion and diſappointment of the *directors*. They ſaw the chicane of their conduct expoſed. Theſe minutes not only confirmed their intended reſignation, which they meant to ſuppreſs, but diſcovered ſome illiberal reflections againſt the ſociety, which were forthwith ordered to be erazed from the books. This meeting ended in tumult and confuſion (*a*).

A conduct of this nature, equally

(*a*) From this ſpecimen of the *directors*, we may fairly conclude, that it was for very prudential reaſons, that afterwards, upon delivering up their books, two chaſms were found in their minutes: —the firſt when they compoſed a *committee*, from the 19.th November 1764, to the 11.th March 1765: — and the ſecond after they became *directors*, from the 13.th June 1765, to the 21.st March 1766. Theſe minutes had been cut out of the books: an undoubted evidence with every impartial reader, that their conduct, during that period, was ſuch as they were aſhamed of, and what they durſt not ſubmit to the public inſpection.

inconſiſtent and dishonourable on the part of the *directors*, exceedingly alarmed the ſociety. However, ſome very reſpectable members waited next day upon the *preſident*, with a view to reconcile the two parties, and to convince him, if poſſible, of the equity of the meaſure which had been propoſed. All efforts to this purpoſe were in vain. He was at length told, that the ſociety would be under the diſagreeable neceſſity of trying their numbers, and of repelling force by force. Theſe threats were returned with disdain, the *preſident* deſiring them to do their utmoſt, and ſwearing that they could not remove a ſingle man in the direction.

It was upon this occaſion, that a circular letter was ſent to the *fellows* of the ſociety, of which I received the following one.

SIR,

» At the laſt general quarterly meeting of the ſociety of artiſts, a law » was propoſed (and carried by a » conſiderable majority) to ſecure » the election of eight new directors » annually. This propoſition for a law » being referred to the directors, » has ſince been returned with their » abſolute refuſal, notwithſtanding » the attorney general's opinion that » the ſociety has full power by their » charter to make ſuch a law, and » by which they, the directors, had » previouſly agreed to abide; and, » as a further aggravation, it muſt be » obſerved, were not ſatisfied with » this uſe of their power, but added » to it moſt reproachful reflections » on the fellows of the ſociety.

» This is therefore to desire your » attendance, on thursday next, at » six o clock, at the castle tavern, » Henrietta street covent-garden, to » meet the rest of the society, in or- » der to consider on proper persons » to serve as directors, for the year » ensuing; whereby it is hoped that » such persons will be named, who » will consider the general interest » of the society ».

We are, &c.

Castle tavern, Henrietta street.

Octob. 8.th 1768.

This letter, being signed by some worthy members, induced me to attend the meeting. Upon my arrival I found a numerous assembly of the *fellows*. The situation of the society's affairs was examined; and every fact that was mentioned served to confirm

the truth of the arbitrary meaſures of the *directors*, and the neceſſity of a reformation. The allegations, unfavourable to the *directors*, were not contradicted even by their ſpies, who had been ſent to this meeting, to bring them intelligence of what was doing there. A motion was therefore made, viz. whether they ſhould attempt to remove only eight of the *directors*, or the whole twenty four. The latter was agreed to: the *fellows* deeming it the leaſt indelicate method not to particularize names, and never doubting but that ſuch as had real merit would again fall into the direction. Upon the day of the general election, ſixteen of the *directors* were removed, and their places ſupplied by a like number of ingenious artiſts from among the fellows.

A few days after the election, a

meeting of the new direction was called. The firſt buſineſs that came before them, was the propoſed law for a rotation in the direction. Debates enſued, which ended in the following motion, viz. » That the conſideration » of paſſing a law, to ſecure a change » in the direction annually, be con- » ſidered at a future meeting of the » *directors* ». This motion was warmly oppoſed by eight of the old *directors*, who were preſent; but it was carried by the unanimous voices of the new ones.

It was at this meeting that M. Chambers, forgetting that decency of behaviour, which is expected from men in all civilized ſocieties, gave way to paſſion and reſentment, and threw out many unbecoming reflections, againſt the new elected *directors;* inſomuch, that ſeveral of his own party were ashamed of his con-

duct. He left the room in a precipitate manner, but, ſenſible of the impropriety of his behaviour, he afterwards wrote letters to ſeveral of the *directors* apologizing for it: to myſelf he made a verbal excuſe.

Diſappointed of their ambitious views in the ſociety, ſince the time of the laſt general election, the whole of the old *directors* had frequent and ſecret meetings. From what actually happened, we may preſume that, in theſe aſſemblies, they concerted ſome plan, for engaging his Majeſty to countenance their party. They had, no doubt, prepared his mind, by giving him, from time to time, a partial detail of ſuch part of their diſputes with the ſociety, as tended moſt to facilitate their intentions, ſuppreſſing on all occaſions the generous motives which influenced the conduct of their oppoſers.

The diſgraceful ſtate of the late erected *royal academy*, ſupported by an annual guinea ſubſcription, though adopted from M. Dalton by the old *directors*, furniſhed them matter for this application to the Sovereign.

M. Chambers was appointed to carry their new propoſals to the King; but it ſeems he declined the office. The road, however, was ſoon paved by others, and a petition was preſented. When once this ſtep had been taken, M. Chambers was ſuppoſed to have got the better of his delicacy, and, availing himſelf of the influence he had obtained with his Majeſty, became the chief conductor of this tranſaction.

We cannot trace the operations of theſe *old directors*, during this period, which were carried on in the dark. It is from the conſequences only,

that we are enabled to form our opinions. Reports, indeed, ſoon began to be circulated, that they had availed themſelves of his Majeſty's goodneſs, and that the plan of the academy was to be enlarged. A letter of reſignation, from the *eight directors*, who had remained at the laſt election, was the firſt circumſtance that confirmed theſe reports (*a*). This letter was penned with all the embarraſſment of mortified pride with regard to what was paſt, and of exulting triumph from the royal ſupport,

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(*a*) *The letter was as follows.*

To Joshua Kirby Eſquire, Preſident of the ſociety of artiſts of Great Britain.

Nov. 10th, 1768.

SIR,

» THOUGH we had the ſtrongeſt objections to the » unwarrantable manner, in which moſt of the » preſent directors of the ſociety of artiſts were » elected, yet, our affection for the community was » ſuch, that we had, in ſpight of every motive to » the contrary, reſolved to keep poſſeſſion of our

which they knew, by their artifice, was now ſecured to them. Another

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» directorſhips, but finding the majority of the » preſent direction bent upon meaſures which we » think repugnant to our charter, and tending to » the deſtruction of the ſociety, we judge it no » longer ſafe to keep poſſeſſion of our employments, » therefore do hereby reſign them, that no part of » the blame, which will naturally follow the mea- » ſures now perſuing, may in any shape be laid » upon us.

» From the motions, and inſinuations, of the » laſt meeting, we clearly ſee, what plan is to be » perſued, and we likewiſe clearly perceive, that » however odious, and hurtful ſuch a plan may be, » we ſhall find it utterly impoſſible to prevent it.

» We would not however, by any means be un- » derſtood to object to every remaining director, » you Sir, and ſome others, we have the higheſt » eſteem for, as you have been elected into your » offices without taking part in any intrigue, and » being men of honour and ability in your profeſ- » ſions, are extremely proper to fill the places » you occupy. We are therefore,

your and their

Moſt obedient humble ſervants.

Jos.[h] WILTON.	W.[m] CHAMBERS.
Edw.[d] PENNY.	J. M. MOSER.
Rich.[d] WILSON.	Paul SANDBY.
Benj.[n] WEST.	F. M. NEWTON.

event immediately followed, which brought the whole to light.

A new plan of a royal academy was formed. The King, no doubt, had been misled by the miſrepreſentations of the junto. They muſt have taken pains to prevent his getting proper information of the true ſtate of facts; otherwiſe he never could have adopted ſo circumſcribed a plan, or countenanced ſuch a ſet of artiſts.

By this plan, a royal eſtabliſhment was to be ſupported from the produce of an annual exhibition; and the deficiencies were to be ſupplied out of his Majeſty's privy purſe.

Our Junto could not but be ſenſible of their want of merit to attract the attention of the public at their exhibitions. They therefore went about, in a ſecret manner, to engage into their party, ſuch of the members of the

the ſociety, as they imagined would be moſt ſubſervient to their purpoſes, availing themſelves of his Majeſty's name and authority. They were received by many with a becoming diſdain; others shamefully deſerted their party, notwithſtanding they had on various occaſions treated theſe *directors* with the moſt contemptuous epithets.

Thus was the King artfully led to patroniſe a meaſure, which was repugnant to his royal dignity, and to the natural dictates of his own breaſt, as well as inconſiſtent with itſelf. — With one arm, he had extended his favour and protection to a body of artiſts: with the other, he was now raiſing up a faction from the ſame body, who in the moſt shameful manner had profited themſelves of his goodneſs, and who, contrary to their ſolemn obliga-

tions, and in direct oppoſition to the laws which his Majeſty himſelf had preſcribed, were eſtabliſhing a monopoly in the arts, and promoting the ſeeds of diſcord, by excluding from the royal protection every one who was not of their immediate cabal.

During theſe contentions, Sir Joshua Reynolds did not interfere. He had long withdrawn himſelf from the private meetings of theſe *directors;* declaring that he was no friend to their proceedings. When he diſcovered that they were to raiſe up a ſchiſm in the arts, and make a ſeparate exhibition from that of the ſociety, he promiſed, to a particular friend of his, that he would exhibite with neither. Had he kept to that reſolution, or acted upon generous enlarged principles, he would have ſtood as ſuperiour to thoſe of the junto in character, as he did in abili-

ties in his profeſſion. But the caſe was otherwiſe: For, 'tis ſaid, that M. Chambers, a principal actor in this affair, aſſuring him of being preſident of the royal academy, and holding out a farther honour he had in view for him, gained this ingenious artiſt to the party of a ſet of men, whoſe conduct he had hitherto openly condemned. Soon after, to add dignity to the academy, he received the honour of knighthood from the King, who, till this hour, has never once employed him as an artiſt.

Having obtained this important acquiſition, they created offices, and voted themſelves into ſalaries. Their plan of the academy now appeared in its genuine nature; calculated with a view to preſerve that power, which it is obvious they could not have obtained

from the King, had the ſtate of the arts at that time been fairly repreſented to his Majeſty.

The intention ſurely of every royal eſtabliſhment, for the improvement either of arts or ſciences, is to receive every man who is likely to do honour to the inſtitution. Such is the ſpirit of the royal ſociety of London, of the royal academy, of painting and ſculpture at Paris, of the academy of S. Luke at Rome, of the Imperial Academy of painting at Florence, and of many other inſtitutions in different parts in Europe. All theſe, I believe were conceived upon liberal and generous principles, and calculated to reflect a luſter on their reſpective founders and patrons. The exhibitions too, (always gratis,) of theſe academies of painting are, as in reaſon they ought to be,

confined ſolely to the works of the academicians; by which means there is a proper emulation excited amongſt the ſtudents to attain this honour.

Let us now take a ſurvey of the royal academy of London. No ſooner had theſe artiſts fortified themſelves under the banners of royalty, than it appeared, that their ſole view was to retain the power which they had uſurped. They were about twenty four in number. They deemed it neceſſary to ſecure to themſelves a perpetual majority in their aſſemblies. They circumſcribed therefore, the number of the members of this academy to forty. By this means the ſame *twenty four* men were ſure to be of conſequence, and to be capable of carrying any queſtion in a ſociety of *forty* members. Had they made a part only

of a more numerous aſſociation, they would often have felt their ſituation humiliating.

The very plan which they rejected when *directors*, and which the ſociety had long ſtruggled for, they now adopted in the government of their new academy: For their council, by which they are governed, is ſubject to a yearly rotation: four of them are annually voted out, and theſe do not reſume their ſeats till the whole have ſerved (*a*). — Thus what they called when *directors*, » an attack upon the » freedom of elections, a dangerous

(*a*) See a work which they call — » abſtract of » the inſtrument of inſtitution of the royal academy » of arts » — page 5 th. « The ſeats in council ſhall » go by ſucceſſion to all the members of the ſociety, » four of the council ſhall be voted out every year, » and theſe ſhall not re-occupy their ſeats in the » council till all the reſt have ſerved «.

» innovation on our charter, &c. » was, in the *royal academy* deemed a juſt expedient and ſalutary meaſure.

A public academy being now formed, a meaſure which the generality of theſe academicians had formerly oppoſed, and which the ſociety had long laboured for; in order to confine it the more to their own party, they paſſed a law, which obliged every perſon, before his being permitted to draw in the academy, to make a probation figure; which was to be ſubmitted to the judgment of the council, who ſhould approve, or put a negative on it, as they pleaſed.

This law, in as far as it regarded ſtudents, was proper and judicious: but the impartial reader will eaſily perceive that it was iniquitous when it admitted of no exception: for all the *fellows* of the ſociety who had oppo-

ſed the *directors*, and to whom the moſt valuable furniture of this new academy had in part originally belonged, were excluded by that law. I ſay it did this *effectually*; for no body can ſuppoſe, in ſuch a ſituation of things, that any of them would ſubmit their characters as artiſts to ſuch a partial tribunal. Experience has proved it. In conſequence therefore of this excluſion, a motion was made, in the ſociety, for eſtabliſhing an academy for themſelves. M. Kirby, the preſident, then obſerved, that ſuch a plan would be conſtrued by the King, as acting in oppoſition to his Majeſty's meaſures, and if the ſociety perſiſted in it, at that time, he ſhould beg leave to reſign the chair. — Thus many artiſts of character, who had been ſubſcribers to the academy in S. Martin's-lane, after having been deprived of

their property, ſaw themſelves now excluded from an advantage, which was intended by the King for the moſt public utility; and even reſtrained, by reſpect for that great perſonage, from procuring that benefit to themſelves, at their own expence.

A pompous account of this royal inſtitution was published, about this time, in the news papers. No notice was taken of any differences with the ſociety; and the public, forſooth, was made to believe, that the whole was a voluntary and original act of the King. — But this impoſition was of too barefaced a nature not to be eaſily ſeen through; it was, however, of a piece with the general conduct of theſe men, as, in the courſe of the following sheets, will ſtill more evidently appear.

There is, indeed, a circumſtance, with regard to the artful addreſs of

theſe academicians, which I cannot avoid taking notice of, becauſe it was a matter of juſt diſtreſs to a moſt worthy man, while he lived. Their plan of a ſeparation from the ſociety had been long concerted; their ambition waited only for a favourable moment to bring the King over to their intereſt. They had ſolicited M. Kirby, before the time of the general election, to become the preſident, which that gentleman with difficulty agreed to, not being ſufficiently acquainted, he ſaid, with the affairs of the ſociety: but his difficulties were removed, by their aſſuring him of every aſſiſtance in their power. After the election was over, and ſixteen of the *directors* were removed, he was again ſolicited, by the remaining eight, to continue in the chair: he agreed to do ſo, upon their repeated aſſurances

that they would aſſiſt, and take no ſtep without conſulting him. But in place of fulfilling their engagements, he was not once apprized of their frequent meetings, nor of any meaſure they had taken, till the whole was concluded, and they had obtained the King's ſign manual. It was then too late for this gentleman to interpoſe in his royal Maſter's behalf; and he ſaw with deeper concern the injury which his Sovereign had received, than the ill treatment he himſelf had ſuffered.

Every means were uſed by the new academicians to inveigle the members from the ſociety: and the alternative, which was held out, of *doing a pleaſure or diſpleaſure to the King*, could not fail to engage many. The ſociety was alarmed; but ſtill there remained a number of ingenious artiſts;

ſome of them, indeed, of ſuperiour abilities, in their particular branches, to any in the royal academy.

A reſolution was then taken, by the ſociety, to preſent a petition to the King. It was on this occaſion, I propoſed that a ſtate of the ſociety's grievances, and the conduct of the academicians should be layed before his Majeſty. Had this been done, he would have ſeen things in a very different light, from that in which they had been repreſented: the veil of obſcurity would have been removed, and the very men who had become his favourites would, in all probability, have been remanded back to their duty; and his Majeſty would have then had an opportunity of eſtabliſhing a royal academy upon a liberal plan, and ſuch as would have united all the ingenious artiſts of this kingdom. But

my propoſal was not approved of, and the petition, which from an over cautious prudence and fear of offending had been mutilated into nothing, was preſented.

A few days after, M. Kirby, the preſident, delivered the King's anſwer. It was to the following purpoſe viz. » That the ſociety had his Majeſty's » protection, that he did not mean to » encourage one ſet of men more » than another; that having extended » his favour to the ſociety by his » royal charter, he had alſo encourag- » ed the new petitioners; that his » intention was to patronize the arts; » that the ſociety might reſt aſſured » his royal favour ſhould be equally » extended to both; and that he » ſhould viſit their exhibitions as » uſual ».

His Majeſty accordingly honoured

the ſociety, at their next exhibition, with his royal preſence, and a purſe of l. 100. But, ſince that time, his *protection* and *encouragement* have not been attended with any outward mark, to enable us to trace them. On the contrary, the public believe that the King looks upon thoſe who are not academicians as *inferiour* artiſts, his royal diploma declaring the academicians (altho ſome of them are among the loweſt artiſts) to have been » *ſelected* » *from among the ableſt and moſt reſ-* » *pectable artiſts reſident in Great Bri-* » *tain* «.

From the King's anſwer to the petition, it was evident, that no coalition, agreeable to the requeſt of the petitioners, was to take place. I then propoſed that a fair ſtate of our diſputes ſhould be laid before the public. This, perhaps, might have found its way to

the royal ear. But the ſame caution, the ſame tenderneſs, the ſame fear of offending, which had mutilated the petition, was the cauſe of this plan's being dropt. It ſeemed to be the only method left, by which the ſociety could either expoſe the conduct of their enemies, or juſtify themſelves to his Majeſty. In a free country, it is perfectly conſiſtent with the higheſt reſpect for the Sovereign, to expoſe the miſconduct of his ſervants, in every department. And knowing that the King wished upon every occaſion to ſhew himſelf the common father and protector of all his ſubjects, I felt a conviction that he would graciously approve of any repreſentation, founded in truth and juſtice, however it might contradict, what before had appeared to him in that light.

The next ſtep of our academicians

was more alarming, and affected me more particularly than any thing they had yet done. It was an attack upon the art of engraving: a profeſſion which will tranſmit to poſterity the works of painters, when devouring time has left no traces of their pencils: a profeſſion which had been as well the ſupport of my numerous family, as the ſource of my principal pleaſure through life.

In modelling the plan of their academy, I had the honour, as I was informed, to be particularly remembered by them. At length, the more effectually to prevent every chance, that I might have, of partaking the honours they were sharing, it was propoſed that nothing leſs than a total excluſion of engravers should take place. Amazing that men, who pretended to promote the fine arts, and reflect

honour

honour upon the King, could have the effrontery to preſent the public with a regulation equally contradictory and unjuſt! (*a*)

When men are guided by falſe and underhand motives, they meet with eternal embarraſsments, and are ever reduced to act with inconſiſtency. No ſooner had the academicians paſſed this law, which in a manner gave the lie to the royal eſtablishment, and which excluded every ingenious engraver and native of this kingdom, than they admitted among them M. Bar-

(*a*) It is a juſtice, due to the ingenious M. Weſt, to acquit him of having had any share in this proceeding. This gentleman warmly oppoſed the motion: he entered into the merits of the profeſſion in its various conſequences: he shewed the advantages which painting reaps from it, as well as benefits which might result from it to this country as a commercial nation. But his endeavours were to no purpoſe, and the meaſure was carried againſt him.

tolozzi an engraver and a foreigner. The better to cover this glaring partiality, they pretended to receive him as a painter; and inſiſted upon his furnishing them with a picture, at the opening of their exhibition. This artiſt, inſenſible to that regard which he owed to his own profeſſion, had the humility to comply with this colluſion; and notwithſtanding he was ſuppoſed by many, to have had the aſſiſtance of his countryman M. Cipriani, he produced a ſpecimen, as a painter, from which he acquired no honour; for it was by far inferiour to the generality of his works as an engraver.

The Academicians ſoon felt the diſapprobation of the public: their proceedings were univerſally condemned: and the real friends of the King regretted his having had ſuch adviſers.

To cover therefore their reprehenſible conduct, they had the meanneſs to propagate a falſehood, viz. that they had copied this part of their inſtitution, which regarded the excluſion of engravers, from the royal academy of painting at Paris. This they did, when at the ſame time, every one of them knew, that I had been received a member of that academy, as an engraver.

This impoſition being ſoon detected, they afterwards pretended, that they had followed the example of the academy of S. Luke at Rome. Here, indeed, they had ſome ſanctuary: but even this did not long protect them. Every one knows that the art of engraving, ſince the days of Marc Antonio, was never properly cultivated by the Romans. But was this a reaſon for excluding it from the royal acade-

my of London? Several of the leading members of that academy at Rome, with whom I was well acquainted, frequently lamented to me that this art had not met with proper attention in their academy. What pity, the man of taſte will ſay, that engraving was not included in the Roman, as well as in the Pariſian, inſtitution! Had Rome produced her Audrans, her Edelinks, &c. how many of the fineſt works of fancy would have been preſerved, which time has now deſtroyed! And the man of a commercial turn will ſay, what riches would not ſuch productions have brought into Italy, from all parts of the world! There is, however, a circumſtance, which I muſt mention, to the honour of the Romans, viz. that at the very time when theſe academicians of London were meditating to ſeclude me from

the public attention, upon my return to my country, that very academy of S. Luke at Rome, which they pretended to imitate, did, in a full aſſembly of their body, over-rule the laws of their inſtitution, and admitted me a member of that academy, ſolely from the merit which they were pleaſed to aſcribe to me as an engraver. This fact, I flatter myſelf, is favourable to the art of engraving: it is a proof that this reſpectable body thought it deſerving of every honour in their power, although it had not been originally cultivated by their academy.

Our academicians being thus driven from the ridiculous shelter they had taken at Paris and Rome, it became neceſſary for them to aſſign other reaſons to the public, for having excluded engravers. They therefore ſaid, — that engravers were man of no ge-

nius, — ſervile copiers, — and conſequently not fit to inſtruct in a royal academy. This too, I am ſorry to ſay it, was the language, as I was informed, held by their preſident. In short every odium, that could be deviſed, was thrown upon this art; and thoſe who profeſſed it were held out to the public, as too contemptible to merit the attention of this eſtablishment.

I shall, indeed, ſo far agree with the royal academicians, that engravers in general are not qualified to inſtruct in an academy, no more than portrait painters, landſcape painters, minature painters, coach painters, &c. of which this academy is chiefly compoſed. It is well known that in all academies, properly regulated, the task of inſtructing is reſerved for hiſtorical-painters and ſculptors only: ſo that in reality if we ſet aſide the foreigners, of whom one

is an engraver, who are adopted to inſtruct in this academy, there are few of our royal academicians who are properly qualified to inſtruct, or capable of drawing a figure, with either propriety, taſte or elegance. Examine their works, and let their merits be put to the teſt. Nothing leſs than the illiberal treatment I have received from them could have forced me to arraign their abilities before the public. Let the public therefore decide between us.

I could pardon the generality of theſe academicians, who certainly have no claim with poſterity, for paſſing whatever laws were propoſed by their leaders, howſoever inconſiſtent or improper: but when I ſee an artiſt of ſuperiour merit juſtify ſuch proceedings, I confeſs, I am much ſurpriſed. Such reflections muſt ap-

pear to every candid judge, not only an attack upon the reputation of the living, but upon the memory of many ingenious engravers, who had been eſteemed as ornaments in the ages in which they lived. I believe I may ſo far acquit Sir Joshua Reynolds, as not to charge him with being the propoſer of the excluſion; he having only given his aſſent to what was urged by others. But this was a great deal too much if his heart condemned it.

No body knew better, or has more experienced, than Sir Joshua Reynolds the importance of engraving; and eſpecially in a country where the arts, yet in their infancy, were now to be improved by a ſchool of painting. What idea can the reader form of a ſet of men, who, laying aſide that regard which they owed to the arts

in general, and honour of the Sovereign, were on this occaſion ſo totally inſenſible of what could not but affect their own reputation? I appeal to their underſtandings, whether perpetuating the merit of their works to poſterity, ſuppoſing them to be men of abilities, muſt not, in a great meaſure, depend upon the perfection of engraving, an art, which they meant to diſgrace by this excluſion?

Since the memorable aera of the revival of the arts, in the fifteenth century, I know no painter, the remembrance of whoſe works will depend more on the art of engraving than that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. This was not the caſe with the great maſters, Titian, Rubens, Vandyke &c. Their works have ſtood the teſt of ages, and yet they were munificent patrons of the arts in every branch, and in none more than that of engraving. How

ſhall poſterity judge of the generality of Sir Joshua's works, but by the prints which ſhall be tranſmitted from them? And had he reared up, under the protection of the royal academy, an Edelink, a Pontius, a Bolswert, with what ſuperiour advantage would he have appeared? I am very conſcious of the merit of this artiſt, and on all occaſions do it ample juſtice. The ideas which he adopts from the great maſters, the agreeable adjuſtment of many of his figures, and the natural eaſe and grace, which he generally introduces into his portraits, are highly worthy of admiration.

No man could have wished for a fairer opportunity of doing himſelf credit, by ſerving the arts eſſentially, than Sir Joshua had, when he was made preſident of the royal academy. He could eaſily have obliterated the

unhappy diviſions, which a few deſigning men had raiſed up. He could have united the arts, and have protected them in all their branches. The artiſts of every profeſſion, who had any claim to true merit, wished for nothing more: they would have gone hand in hand with him, in doing honour to themſelves, to this country, and above all to the royal inſtitution. — But we are left to lament that he adopted meaſures not his own, and ſupported a plan that was dictated by ſelfiſhneſs, ambition and reſentment: a plan which confined royal munificence to forty men, and many of thoſe the moſt indifferent artiſts in the kingdom, whilſt a number of ingenious ones were not only excluded, but their characters moſt ſhamefully depreciated.

Not being able to defend their con-

duct, the academicians found themſelves under the humiliating neceſſity of repealing their law, with regard to the excluſion of engravers. But what was the conſequence? The remedy became worſe than the diſeaſe. To ſave appearances with the public, they now reſolved to admit a certain number of engravers; but ſtill to bring, as much as poſſible, the art into contempt. Care was therefore taken, that the *mode of admiſſion* ſhould effectually *exclude* every engraver, who has any of that conſcious pride, which the better artiſts always poſſeſs. Theſe engravers are not to be admitted academicians, as in the royal academy of painting at Paris, but termed aſſociates. At the ſame time a law was paſſed, by which engravers are expreſsly excluded from every ad-

vantage or honour in the academy (*a*). To complete what they had begun, and to throw the laſt odium, that could be deviſed, on this profeſſion; — the diplomas of the academicians were ſigned by the King, and by which they were created Eſquires; whereas thoſe given to the engravers were conceived in the humbleſt terms, and ſigned only by their preſident and ſecretary.

Theſe proceedings excited freſh indignation, and the conduct of this academy became ſtill more ridiculous. The King's ſincere friends condemned the inconſiſtency of their meaſures, and wondered by what artifice the

(*a*) See » abſtract of the inſtrument of inſtitution » of the royal academy of arts », pag. 24th.

» Theſe aſſociates ſhall not be admitted into any » offices of the ſociety, nor have any vote in their » aſſemblies «.

academicians, not only concealed the impropriety of their conduct, but obtained on all ſuch occaſions his royal approbation.

A conſiderable time paſt before they could make any proſelytes to their new aſſociation. Every artiſt of this profeſſion, who had either ſpirit or abilities, entertained the utmoſt contempt for their propoſal: and had they not had recourſe to the following ſtratagem, the royal academy muſt ſtill have remained without engravers.

M. Major, a man of acknowledged merit, and to whom the art of engraving in this country is greatly indebted, had for ſeveral years enjoyed a place under the government, as ſeal engraver to the King. He was, on this occaſion, accoſted by one of the leaders of the royal academy, who availed himſelf of his Majeſty's

name and authority, in ſuch a way, that M. Major, from his affection to a numerous and growing family, found himſelf under the diſagreeable neceſſity of yielding: and, in ſpite of his natural inclination, and the regard he had to the honour of his profeſſion, he became a ſacrifice to this academy, by being in a manner compelled to fill a place in it, which was calculated ſolely to deceive the public, and to throw an odium on his profeſſion.

Thanks to the ſpirit and genius of this country, that none but two foreigners could be found, for a conſiderable time, to follow the example. They had both ſerved as directors, when the academicians maintained their ſway in the ſociety, and were always a dead weight with that leading faction. One of them had, ſome

years before, applied to be made a member of the royal academy at Paris, but was rejected: he became of courſe, *a proper object* for the royal academy of London.

My ſubject calls me next to conſider the effects of the royal eſtablishment, in their exhibitions, upon the arts themſelves, and upon the taſte of the public.

Had the academy ſet out upon an enlarged and truly royal plan, — had the honour of the King and advancement of the arts, been the ſole objects of this eſtablishment, — had it comprehended all the arts, and all the reſpectable artiſts of this country, and attracted diſtinguished artiſts from other parts of Europe, — had it exhibited annually, and gratis, to all the lovers of the fine arts, the beſt works of the members only (as in other academies)

demies) and excluded whatever was unworthy of the public attention : — in that caſe an exhibition would have been a ſight, that would have charmed the public , inflamed that affection towards the arts , which was riſing here , produced rewards and honours to artiſts , raiſed their emulation, diſtinguished this country, and theſe times, and ſet a laſting and honourable mark on his Majeſty's reign. — But alas ! all ſuch exalted ideas have been ſwallowed up in contracted , mean , ſelfish plans ; which in any country of the world, and under any patronage whatever, will as certainly depreſs the fine arts , as it is certain a great artiſt will deteſt whatever is dirty and mean.

Accordingly we ſee annually a royal exhibition collecting shillings at the door , in order to raiſe money , and

the academicians going about the town, beating up as it were for recruits, to rake together a ſufficient number of pictures to cover their naked walls, forced thereby to admit many performances, diſgraceful to the place and the occaſion: and inſtead of exhibiting a few capital pieces of their beſt hands, they have often introduced ſo many of the ſame maſter, as to ſatiate the ſpectators. We have ſeen, at one time, nine pictures by M. Gainsburgh, twelve by Sir Joshua Reynolds, as many by M. Weſt, and as many by the late M. Cotes: and in each caſe a third part of the number, judiciously choſen, would have done more honour to thoſe artiſts, and conſequently would have pleaſed the public better.

I do but juſtice to the memory of M. Cotes, when I rank him, in ſe-

veral of his portraits, among the fineſt crayon painters, who have hitherto appeared in Europe: many of his oil pictures, however, might have been well ſpared from the public, had not the ſalaries of our academicians depended in a great meaſure upon levying a contribution from the town. — Such diſagreeable conſequences muſt always be the caſe, whilſt this eſtabliſhment remains upon the preſent contracted plan.

I ſhall beg leave to conclude this inquiry, by giving the reader a general view of the progreſs of the art of engraving, bringing it down to the preſent times.

When we look back into antiquity, and form to our imagination an idea of that perfection, to which the Greeks and Romans carried the fine arts, we cannot but lament that they

were ſtangers to that of engraving. The refinement of their taſte, the purity and ſimplicity of their conceptions, and the care which they took, by their works, to tranſmit their reputations to poſterity, leave it beyond a doubt, that this art would have met with their encouragement and protection; as it is the moſt ſecure depoſitary, for after ages, of whatever is truly great, elegant, or beautiful.

It was about the year 1460 that engraving was invented. I ſhall paſs over its early period, which I may have an opportunity of conſidering, on ſome future occaſion.

No ſooner had this art appeared than it attracted general attention. All the great painters adopted it, with a view of multiplying their works, and of tranſmitting them with greater certainty to poſterity. Albert Du-

rer and Andrea Mantegna, two of the greateſt painters of that age, practiſed the art of engraving, and have left us a variety of elegant compoſitions. Theſe early productions of the art, drew by their novelty and excellence, the admiration of all Italy. Raphael himself, that prince of painters, was particularly charmed with the works of Albert Durer: and, in return for ſome prints he had received from him, ſent him a preſent of his own portrait, painted by himſelf.

Marc Antonio, who by ſtudying Albert Durer's works, had improved the art of engraving, was amongſt the firſt who carried it to Rome, when the genius of the divine Raphael preſided over the Roman ſchool. Thoſe who are converſant in the fine arts know, how much this painter

encouraged engraving in Marc Antonio, his ingenious pupil. Examine that engraver's works, and you will find evident proofs of it; ſo much does he breathe, in his fineſt prints, the ſpirit of his ſublime author. Other painters of the Roman ſchool, as well as Parmigiano, Salvator Roſa, &c. have tranſmitted to us many fine compoſitions in this art.

The Bologneſe ſchool furniſheth more recent examples. Annibale and Agoſtino Caracci gave the lead. Agoſtino, although one of the greateſt painters that Italy ever produced, exerciſed the art of engraving in preference to that of painting; and has thereby eſtabliſhed to himſelf, and ſecured to others, a reputation to lateſt poſterity. Guido, Guercino, Simon Cantarini da Peſaro, the Siranis, &c. have all of them left us many

elegant prints, which are ſo many ſtriking proofs of their having cultivated the art of engraving.

To ſee it ſtill in a higher degree of perfection, let us examine it when the ſchool of Rubens preſided in Flanders. Here we ſhall find, that this great painter was no leſs intent upon cultivating this art, than that of painting: conſcious that, by this means, he not only diffuſed his reputation, but ſecured it to ſucceeding generations. Bolſwert, Pontius, Voſterman, &c. were the companions of his, and of Vandyke's leiſure hours. They eſteemed one another; they lived together as friends and equals; and, to uſe the words of a late ingenious author, » *ſous leurs heureuſes* » *mains le cuivre devient or* ». Under » their hands copper became gold ». The works of thoſe engravers, which

are now ſold at the price of pictures, are evident proofs of the honourable ſtate of this art in thoſe days.

What numberleſs examples too have not Rembrandt, Berghem, Oſtade, and others of the Dutch maſters left us of their deſire to cultivate engraving? Have not the works of the former, which are now ſold at moſt amazing prices, tranſmitted a reputation both to himſelf and to his country, which time can never obliterate? The Bloemarts, the Viſchers, and others were certainly ornaments to the age in which they lived.

During the reign of Lewis the fourteenth, what a number of great artiſts appeared in this profeſſion, and did honour to France? The names of Gerard Audran, Edelink, Poilly, &c. will be laſting ornaments to that kingdom. That magnificent prince fre-

quently amuſed himſelf in this way; and ſo charmed was he with the works of the ingenious Edelink, that he conferred upon him the honour of knighthood. It has been owing ſolely to the honourable rank given to this art, by the royal academy of painting at Paris, that it has been cherished and cultivated to ſuch a degree of excellence, that, for a century paſt, Paris has been the depoſitary of the fineſt productions in this way; and theſe have been the ſource of incredible riches to France.

Let us, in the laſt place, follow this art into Great Britain.

Queen Anne, whoſe reign has generally been called the Auguſtan age of this country, was deſirous of tranſmitting to poſterity the Cartoons of Raphael, which had been purchaſed by her grand-father, Charles the firſt.

With this view she ſent for Dorigny, the engraver, as this art was then but little cultivated in Britain. The reception he met with from the Queen is well known. She honoured him with an apartment in the royal palace of Hampton Court, viſited him from time to time, countenanced him on all occaſions, and was the patroneſs of his undertaking.

After her death, King George the firſt imitated the example of Anne, and upon Dorigny's having completed his engravings, not only made him a very conſiderable preſent, but conferred upon him the honour of knighthood.

From the departure of this artiſt, who executed a work which will reflect a laſting credit on Britain, the art of engraving relapſed again into it's former obſcurity, till towards the

middle of this century; when it was revived a fresh, by the introduction of other foreigners, together with the ſucceſsful endeavours of ſeveral ingenious natives of theſe kingdoms. It is not improbable, but in the courſe of time, the names of an Audran, an Edelink, and a Drevet, which do ſo much honour to France, might at leaſt have been rivalled in the productions of this country, had not the eſtabliſhment of the royal academy, to which the arts in general were to look up for protection, given a fatal check to the progreſs of that of engraving; by robbing it of the conſideration, which, I may affirm, was it's inherent right.

Let others appreciate my talents as an engraver: but, without either vanity or preſumption, I may be allowed to ſay, I have been a conſtant and zealous promoter of the arts, and

have, with indefatigable application, endeavoured to do credit to my own profeſſion. It is to reſcue it, in ſome meaſure, from that indignity, which it has unjuſtly ſufferred on my account, rather than from perſonal reſentment againſt the royal academicians, that I have been thus obliged to take up my pen in it's defence. I employ neither wit to amuſe, nor eloquence to perſuade; but ſupported by facts, notorious or well authenticated, I cannot fail to convince: and I humbly hope the public will eſteem the ſubject ſufficiently intereſting, and not unworthy of attention.

Some merit, I flatter myſelf, will be allowed me, in having ſo long concealed what regards the perſonal ill treatment I have ſuſtained. — Let therefore the injuries I have received, and the forbearance with which I have

endured them, vindicate the preſent ſtep, and fully apologize for my conduct.

To conclude: As I have conſidered this matter in a ſerious light; and treated it, I hope, with decency and temper, carefully avoiding all aſperity of expreſſion the ſubject might have naturally led me to uſe; I think it proper to declare, that I ſhall pay no regard to the attacks of anonymous writers, ſhould ſuch deign to honour me with their notice.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM